

SCHOOL BOSS TO leave

Schools

Skeiber says she's looking at all future options

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Skeiber leaving school district

Duxbury School will see a big change in leadership next year, as Superintendent of Schools Susan Skeiber won't be returning.

Skeiber told the School Committee and the public on Wednesday that she would be leaving in June.

"This is not an easy decision, but it is one that I have made," she said.

She has worked for Duxbury since 1995, when she was an assistant principal at what was then Duxbury Elementary School. She stayed on when that school became the Duxbury Middle School, then took over as Alden principal in 1999 before moving into the central office as assistant superintendent. She became superintendent in 2007 and was given a three-year contract.

"I have had the distinct pleasure of working in what is one of the most wonderful school systems," Skeiber said at the School Committee meeting. "The staff's dedication to education and to children is a without comparable measure."

Currently, Skeiber has no concrete plans for the future, she said this week that she does not currently have any job prospects but has no plans to retire from education. She said she'd consider another superintendent or administrative job, as well as consulting or teaching in higher education.

"It is a tremendous loss to our community that Superintendent Skeiber has chosen to move on," said Karen Wong, who also announced at the meeting that she would not seek re-election after six years on the board. "Skeiber is not only highly skilled and focused on preparing our students for the challenges they'll face after high school, she is emotionally invested in the students as she has been in the district for 15 years."

Skeiber said there are several reasons that went into her decision to step down.

"I can't say it's just one particular thing," she said. "It's a variety of things that have made me make that decision."

However, when asked if the recent furor around the decision to change school start times affected her decision, she said the negative tone of the discussions was at least a factor.

"That has had an impact on me," she said.

Wong, who has said publicly that she has lost business because of her stance on the start time issue (she is a professional photographer as well as a freelancer for the Clipper,) said that she believes the negativity over the past two years has had an effect on the administration as well as the committee.

"The superintendent has been playing defense and reacting to issues instead of advancing ideas," she said.

Skeiber said she understands major policy changes elicit passionate reaction from parents and community members.

"I do believe that good debate, listening to both sides of an issue is important," she said. "I think you need to hear where both sides are coming from."

When it came to the start time issue, Skeiber and the School Committee took some heat for not only the final decision, but the process.

"The big issue is communication," she said. "Was there something we could have done more of? I guess probably there was. We felt at the time we were making this pretty upfront, but there's always ways we could have improved."

Part of that passion, however, is what also made Duxbury a good community to work in.

"It certainly is a community that is invested in education," Skeiber said. "People support education and want the best for their kids. I have found over the 15 years people are working on how we improve that education for kids ... so they're prepared for the world they're entering."

Skeiber's career in education started as an elementary school classroom teacher, but as she began to get more involved in leadership roles, she began to consider a move to administration.

"For a great length of time I never would have seen myself leaving the classroom," she said.

Her first job outside of teaching was as a curriculum supervisor for math and tech, which has influenced her view on things like skills students will need to compete in the 21st century.

"I got a chance to see if I liked that end of things," she said. "You can have more of an impact on students."

She said she is proud of the work she's done while serving as superintendent.

"I think we have moved this district considerably forward," she said. "The bottom line for me always is, and always will be, trying to make all decisions based on what I believe is in the best interest of the kids ... I've actually made the statement that I adopt 3,400 children annually. I think administrators need to look at the kids as if they were their own."

Whatever the future holds for Skeiber, she says she won't be leaving the world of education behind.

"Education, for me ... it's a way of life, it's a passion," she said.



Superintendent of Schools Susan Skeiber announced last week that she would be leaving the district at the end of the school year in June.

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